



In The News

www.portland.va.gov

Winter 2011

Dental Clinic Opening

Milestone: 20,000 Hours of Volunteering

VA Vans to Hit the Road

Director's Letter



As 2011 ends and we look forward to the New Year, I extend my personal thanks for everything you do at Portland VA Medical Center to serve our

Veterans. Your compassion and dedication to serving Veterans continues to inspire me and I take pride in all that we have been able to accomplish this year. There is no doubt in my mind that the staff and volunteers of our Portland, Vancouver and community based outpatient sites of care remain committed to providing exceptional care for our Veterans. You make PVAMC an outstanding place to work!

It takes a team approach to accomplish what we do on a daily basis and you are all important to our success. Our education, technology, research, and patient care are exceptional, but you, the dedicated employees, make the PVAMC an inspiring place throughout the year. Over the past year, we accomplished so much that I couldn't possibly list all of them here, but I will share a few highlights:

- Full Joint Commission Accreditation – October 2010
- Magnet Redesignation – December 2010
- Beacon Award for Excellence for Critical

- Care – Silver Recognition - 2011
- Joint Commission Accreditation for Residential Rehab Treatment Program September 2011, with no findings
- Pilot Site for VPS Kiosk Project
- Expansion of services in Vancouver, West Linn, and Hillsboro

There is so much more that we accomplished even as we provided service for more veterans than ever before.

During the holiday season and coming New Year, many of you will take time to reflect on the past year and your professional and personal accomplishments. Others will use the time to plan and coordinate the year ahead. I encourage you to take the time to refresh and recharge, engage with family and friends and take time to enjoy the season. Whatever your approach, take the time to reflect and pat your-

“...take time to reflect and pat yourself on the back...”

self on the back for your contribution to a job well done. I trust that you are as proud as I to be a member of the finest medical

organization in the world. This can only be accomplished through commitment, hard work, dedication, compassion, and love of what you do.

I extend to you, your friends, family, and loved ones, my wish that you have a joyful holiday season and a very Happy New Year.

JOHN E. PATRICK
Medical Center Director





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In The News is an organizational
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and volunteers at the
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'Tis the Season!

*Mark your calendars!
Join us for fun and festivities!*

The holidays are now upon us and it is time for goodwill and cheer! We will be gathering to celebrate on both the Vancouver and Portland campuses.

Vancouver Campus Holiday Party

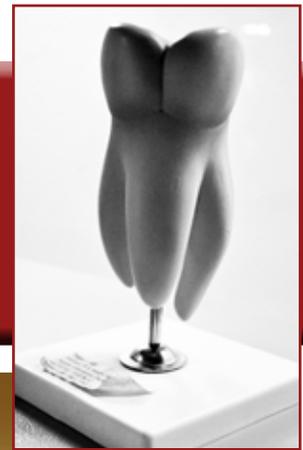
December 19th noon to 2 p.m.
Columbia Room.

Portland Holiday Party

December 20th noon to 3 p.m.
The Auditorium.



Something you can sink your teeth into



Assistant Under Secretary for Health for Denistry, Dr. Patricia Arola
Chief, Dental Service, Portland VA Medical Center (with scissors), Dr. Craig Ling
Director, Portland VA Medical Center, John Patrick
Cutting the ribbon following the opening ceremony presentations

Here's something to smile about! Portland VA Medical Center officially opened a new dental clinic on the Vancouver Campus Nov. 10 in Building 20. The new dental clinic is 20,000 plus square feet and home to 12 new beautifully appointed, state-of-the art dental operatories. That brings the total number of operatories to 38 between the Portland and Vancouver Campus. Since opening in September, the Dental Department has scheduled over 900 plus Veteran dental appointments to serve even more patients than ever before. This is partially due to the addition of four Dentists and three Hygienists to the staff. "We are really excited about opening the Vancouver Dental Clinic," said Chief of Dental Service, Dr.

Craig Ling. "It allowed us to increase our capacity and relocate a portion of dental care for our Veterans."

The dental clinic is housed in a brand new building that will soon also feature a new Eye Clinic, Specialty Care, and Prosthetics departments. Enrollment staff is already serving Veterans in the new facility.

The Portland VA Medical Center serves more than 70,000 Veterans in Oregon and Southwest Washington. In addition to the main campus located on Marquam Hill, the Portland VA Medical Center operates the Vancouver, Washington campus and clinics located in East Portland, Hillsboro, Salem, Warrenton, Bend, The Dalles, and Newport.

By Kelli Roesch

Volunteers In the News

20,000 Hour Milestone... Thelma Hathaway: 50 Years of Volunteering

By Dianna Risley

In 1957, CBS premiered the television show *Leave it to Beaver*, the cost of a first class stamp was three cents, and B-52 bombers began a full-time flying alert in case of an attack by the USSR. It was also the year Thelma Hathaway began volunteering at the former Barnes Hospital, now the Vancouver, Washington campus of the Portland Veterans Affairs Medical Center.

Thelma's 50 year volunteer journey began in the gift shop program at the urging of one of her closest friends. Her friend, already volunteering at the hospital, didn't drive and needed someone to help with transportation in order to continue serving the Veterans. Thelma, then a wife and mother of young children, was looking for her own social outlet and this request set off a lifetime of volunteer service.

While her motivation to begin volunteering at the VA began as a taxi driver for her friend, she was also motivated by her personal family connection to the military. Thelma is one of nine children. Three brothers served in various departments of the military and her husband served in the Army. Her oldest son followed and retired from the Air Force. Widowed now

for 16 years, Thelma says, "Without being able to come in and volunteer and without my activities, my life wouldn't be worth living. This has been a lifesaver."



Although Thelma's favorite volunteer position with the VA has been with the gift shop program, she has worn many different hats including the American Legion Poppy Program, American Legion Auxiliary, serving refreshments at various events, and playing Bingo with Veterans.

In 1980, Thelma began working in the patient transport department

two days a week and remained a fixture until June of 2004 when she was sidelined by surgery. The emergency surgery which placed a stint in her heart did not slow her down or keep her away from her volunteer duties. However in her own best interest, the Chief of Voluntary Service made the decision to move her to the information desk where you can still find her today.

Voluntary Service Specialist Toni Davis says, "Thelma is an amazing asset to our VA. Her value lies in her dependability, vast knowledge of the layout and services on campus, and because she is great with the Veterans. She always places them first."

Thelma has logged more than 20,000 volunteer hours over her many years of service, something most will never achieve. While the VA is eternally grateful to Thelma for her years of service, Thelma says "I feel like I am doing them a service, but they are doing me a service too."

This volunteer author tips her hat to Thelma and feels very privileged to have had the opportunity to meet, interview and watch her in action. May I, and all the other VA volunteers, be inspired and motivated to follow in her footsteps!

Integrated Ethics

Improving Ethics Quality in Health Care



The winners of the Outstanding Performance Standards Award for handwashing. Left to right front row: Brandy Harbin, Julia Zottola, Donna Ruscitti, John Patrick, Director, Portland VA Medical Center, Chuck Colletter, Eleanor Cannady, Jenna Lemrick, Morgan Bresko

Handwashing Recognition!

Medical Center Director John Patrick recently honored the employees of SPECIALTY CLINICS not only for consistent demonstration of excellent hand washing practices within their work areas, but for their leadership as health care providers and exceptional willingness to communicate.

Infectious Disease Control (who identified these staff members through observation and data collection)

in partnership with Preventive Ethics is committed to remind all who work or receive care at the Portland VA Medical Center of the near unparalleled importance of hand washing.

The importance of this one practice in the prevention of spreading disease (in particular *C. difficile*), infection and harm to yourself and those around you cannot be over emphasised.

“Thank you for keeping our Veterans safe from harm and being excellent role models for providing quality health care.”

Morgan Bresko, MPH, MSW
Inpatient Social Worker
Hand Washing Initiative Lead, Preventative Ethics

Wounded Warriors

Tackle the “Mother of all Relays”

The Hood to Coast



For nearly 18,000 running and walking enthusiasts, the weekend before Labor Day is the pinnacle of their yearly training. This year was the 30th anniversary of the much heralded “mother of all relay races.” While many of the racers crossing the finish line were just chalking this race up to another great year, one team was celebrating more than just their finish.

severely injured in conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan. While each member was drawn to this race for different reasons, they all agree that their participation in recreational and competitive sports has been an integral part of the healing

one thing to them that will make them feel better and help them get involved,” he said.

“Maybe I can say one thing to them that will make them feel better and help them get involved.”



process, both physically and mentally.

Army Cpt. Chip Sell incurred multiple shrapnel wounds in 2004 which left him with shrapnel lodged in his knee, a traumatic brain injury as well as post-traumatic stress disorder. Now residing in Vancouver with his wife Marnie and daughter Victoria, Chip hopes his participation on Team

Recovery and participation for Chip is a family affair. Together with Marie, Chip hopes to start a local Portland Metropolitan area chapter of Disabled Sports USA. Disabled Sports, among others, were the agency responsible for providing the support and funds necessary for the Wounded Warriors to participate in the Hood to Coast Relay. All adaptive equipment, including a handcycle, was provided to the Veterans through the VA.

Completing the grueling 197 mile race and crossing the finish line in Seaside gave the members of the Wounded Warriors Hood to Coast team an opportunity to test their skills to the extreme just as they did while serving in the military.

The Wounded Warriors Team, Team Warfighter Sports, is a group of 12 service members who were

Warfighter Sports will inspire other injured Veterans to get involved in sports and see the benefits of participation. He said his participation in sports, “improved my muscle strength and tone, hand eye coordination, flexibility and helped manage external sources of stress while improving my mood and behavior.” Chip’s passion lies in his desire to help others. “Maybe I can say



As the sun set on the beach in Seaside, the Wounded Warriors were able to celebrate their accomplishment, look forward to next year, and reflect on the journey that brought them together.

By Dianna Risley

VA VANS TO HIT THE ROAD



Two of the eight vehicles donated to the Portland VA Medical Center (PVAMC) for Veterans' transportation were displayed at a dedication ceremony at Portland VA Medical Center on Nov. 10. The dedication was a result of a unique partnership between Oregon Department of Transportation, Oregon Department of Veterans' Affairs, Ride Connections, Inc., and the Portland VA Medical Center. The partnership worked to donate good used vehicles to serve the specialized transportation needs of injured Veterans needing assistance getting to the medical facility for appointments and care. Before the vehicles hit the roads in Oregon they will feature graphics identifying them as Veteran transportation and global positioning systems. (Portland VA Medical Center photo by Kelli Roesch.)

By Kelli Roesch



President of Oregon Paralyzed Veterans of America, Jeff DeLeon, demonstrates the capabilities of one of eight vehicles donated to the Portland VA Medical Center for Veterans' transportation as PVAMC employee Duane Benson operates the controls of the lift. (Portland VA Medical Center photo by Kelli Roesch.)



My Health, My Care: 24/7 ^{Online} Access to VA

Good communication is the key to many types of relationships. One relationship that definitely relies on good communication is between a Veteran patient and their Primary Care Provider (PCP). At Portland VA Medical Center, a vital tool for patient communication is Secure Messaging and is a feature of the web-based system MyHealthVet.

Secure Messaging is easy to use and reduces telephone calls and waiting on hold. The patient sends a Secure Message (similar to an email) to their PCP and will receive a response within 72 hours. It is also helpful for questions regarding prescriptions, appointments, lab work, or other things patients may need answered between visits. However, it is only for non-urgent, non-critical communication.

The best part of MyHealthVet is that it can be used from any computer anywhere, 24 hours a day seven days a week, as long as the Veteran patient knows their User ID and Password.



“Being able to use MyHealthVet opens so many doors for the Veteran,” said Carol Kedalo, MyHealthVet Administrator. “It’s made a huge difference and a huge impact on all of our Veterans, but especially for our new Veterans coming home. This is so very helpful!” Chief Health Information Officer Dr. David Douglas believes that doctors who use MyHealthVet also benefit from the program. “Using electronic communication is better than playing phone tag. Patients can instantly have the info,” he said.

Portland VA Medical Center is unique in that all of our PCPs use Secure Messaging, and

some of our Specialty Care Providers are finding it useful as well.

Currently more than 20,000 Veterans are registered and have In-Person Authenticated in MyHealthVet. More than 6,000 have “Opted In” to begin using Secure Messaging. The numbers are growing daily as Veteran Patients know they can communicate with their PCP and many specialty care providers.

Portland VA Medical Center has been the nationwide leader in Veteran patients using MyHealthVet since its beginnings.

To participate in Secure Messaging a Veteran must:

1. Register for an account at www.MyHealth.va.gov
Helpful hints: Be sure to register your name as it appears on your Veteran’s Identification Card (VIC), leaving out your middle name if it is not on the VIC or using your middle name if it does appear on the VIC, and registering as a “VA Patient” and “Veteran.”
2. Become In-Person Authenticated (IPA’d) at Portland VA Medical Center or with one of our Community Based Outpatient Clinics. You will be asked to present a government-issued ID and sign VA release form (10-5345a) either electronically or on paper.
3. Log in to Secure Messaging and “Opt In” to see how this valuable tool can be used.

Portland VA Medical Center welcomes even the smallest in our Veteran's families....

Operation Diaper Bag

Originally organized in 2009 by the Women's Committee to express thanks and recognition to women Veterans for their service, Operation Diaper Bag has now expanded to include any Veteran with an expectant significant other. Each recognized Veteran receives a diaper bag full of new supplies that are vital in any home with a new infant. The supplies include only new or handmade items donated or made by our volunteers, community service organizations and individuals. Some of the items needed for this program include baby monitors, diapers, burping cloths, bibs, pacifiers, bottles, baby wipes, newborn baby clothes, teething rings, small baby toys, gift cards from major retailers, baby blankets, baby formula and diaper bags. Any Portland or Vancouver VA staff member can refer a Veteran who is receiving care from the VA, once they are identified as expecting an addition to their family.



Donations or referral? Please contact Amanda Weber, Voluntary Services, 503-273-5042.

IMPORTANT PHONE NUMBERS

Portland VA Medical Center
503-220-8262 or 1-800-949-1004

Press:

- 1** If you know the extension you need
- 2** Seasonal Flu Shot Clinics and Availability
- 3** Business Office: Patient Accounts, Enrollment, Eligibility, Patient Travel
- 4** Auto Prescription Renewal/Refill Line, Appointment Reminder
- 5** Make or change a Primary Care Appointment
- 6** Primary Care Team
- 7** Pharmacy Customer Service Representative
- 8** Specialty Clinics, including Eye Clinic

All other information, stay on the line to reach an operator.

Billing Questions

1-866-290-4618

Monday- Friday 5 a.m. - 5 p.m. (Pacific)

VA Health Resource Center staff can assist with your VA Billing Statement/Insurance questions.

Veterans Crisis Line

Confidential Help for Veterans and their families

1-800-273-TALK (8255) Press 1 for Veterans

Talk to a trained professional 24/7

visit www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org

My HealthVet

www.myhealth.va.gov

Renew prescriptions online, Communicate with your PCP online using secure encrypted messages, view appointments online

503-721-7854 or 800-949-1004, ext. 57854

VA Benefits Information & Assistance

1-800-827-1000